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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: MOD DANJUMA ON THE OBASANJO-ATIKU-IBB
NEXUS

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR HOWARD F. JETER; REASONS 1.5 (B)
AND (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: During an October 25 meeting with Ambassador Jeter, Nigerian Minister of Defense Lieutenant General (ret.) Theophilus Y. Danjuma discussed the current state of Nigerian politics. Danjuma spoke at length of the tense relationship between President Obasanjo, Vice President Atiku and former military Head of State Ibrahim Babangida, saying IBB was playing Atiku for a fool as he worked to drive a wedge between the President and Vice President. Commenting on National Security Advisor Aliyu Mohammed's loyalties, Danjuma said President Obasanjo is aware of the NSA's disloyalty, but he chooses to keep him close rather than have him publicly join "the other team". Finally, Danjuma dismissed the so-called "Patriots'" plan to limit office holders to single five-year terms as simplistic and unrealistic. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) During an October 25 private MOD office conversation with Ambassador Jeter, Minister of Defense Lieutenant General (ret.) Theophilus Y. Danjuma discussed his views on the relationship between President Obasanjo and Vice President Atiku and the manipulation of both by former military Head of State Ibrahim Babangida. According to Danjuma, IBB has been painstakingly pursuing a strategy to divide and conquer Obasanjo and Atiku for over a year. IBB first tried to persuade Obasanjo to dump Atiku by hinting that releasing the Vice President would ease the President's "image problem" in the North. After nine months of failing to convince Obasanjo to eject Atiku, IBB decided to focus on manipulating Atiku.

3. (C) According to Danjuma, IBB has hoodwinked Atiku, who now believes he has IBB's support. Noting that IBB once fired Atiku from his job as head of customs because of rumored links with "drug barons" and that he considers the Vice President to be "lazy and corrupt," Danjuma said he thought Atiku had been blinded by his own ambition. "Babangida is singing a song he (Atiku) wants to hear."

4. (C) Danjuma asserted that as part of his plan to weaken Obasanjo, Atiku planted the "Mandela Option" stories in the Nigerian press leading to calls for the President to step down after his first term in order to cement the transition to democracy. Danjuma sees this as playing right into IBB's hands. If Obasanjo can be convinced not to run, Atiku would represent an easy opponent for IBB or his surrogate. If Obasanjo stays in the race, Danjuma said the notoriously tight-fisted President would need to spend far more money to insure his victory in the PDP primary.

5. (C) As the conversation turned to the plans and prospects of National Security Advisor Aliyu Mohammed, Danjuma said the former general had been campaigning against Obasanjo for over a year and that Obasanjo was well aware of Mohammed's transgression. Danjuma noted that after Obasanjo learned of Aliyu's attendance at a September meeting where Atiku gave House leaders the green light for Obasanjo's impeachment, the President called the NSA about his lack of support. Danjuma characterized Obasanjo as exceedingly tolerant of Mohammed. He believed Obasanjo had decided it was better to keep Mohammed close rather than to fire him and have him publicly side with his opponents.

6. (C) Finally, Danjuma rejected the proposal put forward by the group of prominent old-guard and predominantly Southern and Middle Belt politicians known as "The Patriots" that elected officials serve single five-year terms. He characterized the group as "senile and mischievous old men" and stated that their plan was unrealistic in Nigeria's political environment, as someone would surely find an excuse to extend the terms further at

the end of the fifth year.

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